

MINUTES OF THE HANOVER BOROUGH COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
February 7, 2023 at 6:00 PM

Chairman Lockard convened the meeting of the Hanover Borough Council Public Safety Committee at 6:00 PM, Tuesday, February 7, 2023 in the Hanover Municipal Building, 44 Frederick Street, Hanover, PA, as advertised.

Attendance: Present were Committee Members Funk, C. Greenholt and Lockard; Council Members Fuentes, Hegberg, Reichart, Roland and Rupp; Mayor Whitman; Staff Members Fire Chief Clouser, Secretary Felix, Manager Lewis, Police Chief Martin and Emergency Management Coordinator Waltman.

Approval of the Minutes: It was moved by Mrs. Funk, seconded by Mrs. Greenholt to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2023 Public Safety Committee meeting. Motion carried.

Public Comment: Chairman Lockard announced that Hanover Borough Council is requesting that all citizens wishing to speak to please sign in at the agenda table at the beginning of the meeting. Citizens are asked to summarize concerns, questions or comments to structure within three (3) minutes to allow adequate time and consideration for all comments to be heard.

The following spoke on the proposed rental registration ordinance:

Jeff Spangler, 205 Carlisle Street, Apt. C: Mr. Spangler read a letter that he sent to his landlord. He stated the ordinance may create a burden of time and staffing, noting his landlord is a former elected official and a reliable person. Mr. Spangler does not support the need for the ordinance.

Arthur Becker, Jr, 529 Carlisle Street: Mr. Becker asked for the chair to give him more than three (3) minutes to comment, as he is speaking for many. Chairman Lockard asked him to keep his comments as brief as possible. Mr. Becker asked for the Borough to invest in real estate and to develop low interest loans for landlords to improve properties. He asked for the Borough to develop a program to give landlords tax credits to improve buildings.

President Reichart clarified that the comments are to be in line with the public safety aspect of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Hegberg asked for Mr. Becker to provide his comments in writing involving issues other than public safety.

Mr. Becker feels there is no need for a new ordinance and felt that the existing Ordinance No. 1796 is sufficient.

Merle Feder, 173 Primrose Lane: Ms. Feder stated that she is a landlord and a resident of Hanover and does not agree with the proposed ordinance for all of the reasons Mr. Becker stated. She feels it will be burdensome to landlords.

Zachary Zawish, 210 York Street: Mr. Zawish stated that he has never met Mr. Riston and that he has never owned a home. He has two (2) blighted properties on his block. He noted that there are no firewalls between his house and a blighted property, and there is a danger of fire. Leaving this issue to tenants for landlords to police this issue is not effective.

Philip Redding, 230 Stock Street: Mr. Redding asked if the committee had any documentation.

Borough Manager Lewis read the list of meetings that were held involving the proposed Rental Registration Ordinance thus far:

11/23/2022 **Council Meeting** - Motion died for lack of second to approve ordinance
10/19/2022 Council Workshop approved advertisement of proposed ordinance/1 year inspection implementation
9/28/22 **Council Meeting** - Ordinance was supposed to be present on this agenda but agenda was revised
9/21/2022 Council Workshop approved advertisement of proposed ordinance with phased in inspections
8/17/2022 Council Workshop approved advertisement of proposed ordinance with phased in inspections
6/15/2022 Council Workshop approved Option C for advertisement to include both registration/inspections
12/15/2021 Council Workshop Discussion of Rental Property Inspection
11/17/2021 Council Workshop Discussion of Rental Property Database as a goal
10/20/2021 Council Workshop Discussion of Rental Property Database
05/19/2021 Council Workshop - asked Public Safety Committee to begin concept discussion
8/19/2020 Council Workshop Discussion
1/13/2020 Public Safety Committee Discussion for proposed fire residential rental fire inspections

Philip Redding, 230 Stock Street: Mr. Redding questioned what the problem was that needed to be solved and why there is a need for a database of residential rentals.

Chairman Lockard read a list of residential rental fires from the Fire Chief Clousher that occurred from 2017 to the present and their causes.

Mr. Reichart reported that eighty-nine (89%) percent of all fires were in rental units, so that is the reason why Council is taking a look at the rentals.

Philip Redding, 230 Stock Street: Mr. Redding questioned the significant number of the fires that were started from smoking or unattended cooking.

Mr. Lockard offered to get in touch with Fire Chief Clousher to determine how many fires on the list could have been prevented by an inspection.

Isaac Riston, 227 Locust Street: Mr. Riston stated that he felt that the ordinance needs to be implemented as soon as possible, especially the inspections for the safety of the tenants. He stated that he has surveyed citizens in Ward 5, with an 8.7% result from tenants, landlords and homeowners. He noted that many local municipalities have rental inspection ordinances. Many rentals do not have a smoke detector. He asked for current tenants in the audience to please stand; there were approximately fifteen to twenty (15-20) citizens present who were in favor of the ordinance. He suggested that better leverage could be given to "good" landlords. He proposed an inspection point system so that "good" landlords could be on a longer cycle, and "bad" landlords could be inspected on a more frequent basis. He recommended review of the rental inspection ordinance of Spring Garden Township.

Chairman Lockard reiterated that safety is the main concern.

Mark Tayler, 168 Second Avenue: Mr. Taylor was in favor of the proposed ordinance, referencing an outside wire that caused a house fire in his rental. Faulty wiring between flooring was also a cause of a fire where he lived. He agreed that this issue is not necessarily a landlord or a tenant issue, noting that downtown buildings are very close together, and everyone is affected. If the inspections could have stopped three (3) of these fires in the last five (5) years, it is worth it to pursue this ordinance.

Brenton Green, 210 Meade Avenue: Mr. Green stated that he is a business owner in Ward 5. The amount of money for the inspections is very small, and putting the cost of inspections over the safety aspect does not make sense. Potential retaliation from landlords is very real for a tenant, and many tenants are afraid to report code violations.

A citizen stated that all the citizens present should be informed that the meeting was being recorded. Chairman Lockard pointed out that the meeting was being recorded.

Miles Myers, 42 Carlisle Street: Mr. Myers stated that he is co-owner of the business "Let's Play Games" on Carlisle Street. His building has potential safety hazards. He noted that landlords that live on the property are immune. He noted that he has only one exit in the front of his building, and no rear exit. This ordinance is for renters who do not have people looking out for them. He feels that one side of the issue is for the financial aspect and the other side is concerned about the safety aspect.

Mrs. Funk and Mr. Lockard encouraged Mr. Myers to contact the code enforcement officer to help to resolve the safety issues.

Mr. Reichart also suggested contacting their insurance agent regarding any potential safety issues.

Colleen Sweeney, 28 Penn Street: Ms. Sweeney stated that one year ago her neighbor's house (the other half of the duplex) caught on fire and that the property had many code violations. She bears the burden, inconvenience and cost from this fire. She is a homeowner, but she became a victim of her neighbor's fire.

Rebelsa Lynn, 95 South Street, Second Floor: Ms. Lynn stated that she is a renter, and does not appreciate some of the negative comments. She noted that she has a landlord who is not safety conscious. Every house is close to another house, making others vulnerable as well. Renters who are living paycheck to paycheck do not have the ability to deal with the safety issue, and many cannot afford to leave their current residences.

Mr. Lockard thanked all citizens for their concerns.

New School Zone – Requested by Hanover Public School District

Manager Lewis spoke for Public Works Director Grimm who was unable to attend. The proposed school zone is for the Hanover Street Elementary School at 101 East Hanover Street, which needs to be authorized and permitted by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). It was moved by Mrs. Funk, seconded by Mrs. Greenholt to approve staff to move forward with the authorization from PennDOT. Motion carried.

Public Safety Aspect of Rental Registration

Mr. Lockard asked for comments from Council to move forward to make an effective compromise.

The Committee and Council Members present discussed the need for direction to move forward.

President Reichart reminded the Committee to consider that the prime concern is safety. Discussion at workshop would be the next step and not the current step. If the Committee feels it is not a safety issue, then the effort will die.

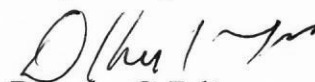
Mrs. Greenholt stated that she liked the idea of a balanced workshop focusing on the safety aspect only.

A motion was made by Mrs. Funk seconded by Mrs. Greenholt to move the matter forward to the Council workshop for consideration. Motion carried.

Emergency Management Director Report – No report.

Adjournment: It was moved by Mrs. Funk, seconded by Mrs. Greenholt to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 PM. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Dorothy C. Felix
Borough Secretary